

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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OUR WELL-DRESSED HISTORY

(continued from March Issue)

From the beginning, Monterey has been a place where travellers came bringing lovely things with them. While only a few costumes and accessories can be positively linked with early residents, most can be identified as typical of clothing once worn here. For example, a frock coat labeled as having come from Illinois matches one shown in an early photograph of Thomas O. Larkin. Occasionally we find a note such as one stating that a certain bonnet was worn by a lady who lived in a log cabin on Jefferson Street. The Association's aim is to document each acquisition as carefully as possible according to one of three criteria: (1) that it be a part of Monterey history; (2) that it be a part of California history; (3) that it be an outstanding example of a specific period and add to completion of a collection.

Every museum and costume collection has many wedding gowns surviving, because brides tend to save them. Those we have are lovely and as special to us as to their owners. Almost as special are ballgowns. With these it is possible to follow changes in fashion, fabrics, details of construction, and new modes of elegance. Often these features have prevailed to their owners over sentiment, as in the case of one lovely lace gown worn at a young girl's engagement party. She married another man, but saved *that* special engagement dress.

One of our closets is bursting with Spanish shawls of every color in the spectrum. The materials are of the heaviest crepe and are brightly embroidered with huge flowers and edged with hand-knotted silk fringe. For almost 100 years these shawls were worn to fiestas, to church, and to celebrations. They were made in China for export on Manilla galleons and China Clippers to Spain and her colonies. Only when they are displayed together is it apparent that the smaller shawls with subtler colors and shorter fringe are the older. The larger, gaudier ones—some would cover a king-size bed—were popular in the 1920's, and the heavy fringe indicates a period when women draped them over the short, sleeveless, shapeless chemises of the time. The fringe of the older shawls served for more than adornment. Senoritas were closely chaperoned and had limited opportunity to speak with escorts, so the ladies were inventive. By "accidentally" catching their shawl fringe on a man's coat button, quite a conversation could be managed while untangling the fringe. Alas, many shawls have a tell-tale mark showing that their final glory was on a piano with a flower pot set in the middle!

In the Spanish period black lace mantillas were owned by only the wealthiest women. So important were they that, by law, no mantilla could be taken from its owner for any

reason including payment of a debt. A mantilla was always triangular and worn with the point over the forehead where it was held by ribbons or, later, draped over a high comb. Some were of blonde lace; some were diamond shaped, worn so that only one lovely brown eye showed. Rebozos, however, were long and narrow and made of silk, wool, cotton, or lace. Mexican women used striped ones as sashes, baby carriers, or to tie bundles on their heads. The lace rebozo was a favorite of the Spanish-born Empress Eugenie of France, and she kept them in high fashion for many years in Europe. Lace shawls also became extremely popular and are often mistaken for mantillas. However, the designs on the former clearly show that they must be worn with the wide edge across the shoulder and the point down the back.

Our most exotic garments are Chinese robes, skirts, or aprons and jackets. Chinese embroidery is so exquisite it is difficult to comprehend that every stitch is made by hand. The designs are full of symbolism. Only after a great deal of study does one find that the most magnificent court robe can be read as clearly as one of our modern T-shirts.

Then there are mysteries! Why several boxes containing gowns that were never finished? All the pieces are there—sleeves, waist, skirt panels, petticoats, trim, buttons—everything. Bastings are in place, the needle is still threaded and ready to take the next stitch. What interrupted the sewer? Did her lover jilt her? Her husband die? More puzzling, why were the pieces saved for 80 years?

On occasion, one almost believes in spirits! A striking black cape of silk faille, heavily trimmed with passementerie and dull jet beads, suggesting it was a mourning wrap, absolutely refuses to be photographed. The film sticks in the Polaroid each time we try, and when the picture does finally emerge it is a shapeless gray blur.

Recently, we received a gown of brown silk worn by a bride in Massachusetts in 1857. She also saved her hoop skirt, perfectly preserved, so it is possible to study the intricate construction and marvel of the invention that was to free women from the bulk of 6 to 8 petticoats. The fabric for the gown was brought from China by the bride's father, a sea captain in the China Trade. The crowning treasure is a copy of the Godey print from which the dress was styled.

Three taupe brown bustle dresses have come from widely different sources and locales. There is information that these dresses were not simply those of a favorite color or style of one particular lady. When one was displayed at the Antique Show in 1979 it was extremely difficult to fit it onto the manikin even though the form was especially constructed from careful measurements. At last, we managed to fasten the waist band and straighten the side seams and begin to stuff it into shape. Suddenly, it was apparent that it was a maternity dress, cleverly constructed and elaborately draped. As soon as the proper shape was achieved, it settled back and became the star of the show. Another of the three gowns is labeled as having been a wedding dress from Liverpool, England. Still, three similar dresses in color and drape bustle style were baffling. Then a biography of Charles Worth, famous designer in history, solved the mystery. It revealed that one of the ladies in Eugenie's court decided that she would wear nothing but a special shade of brown as a form of religious observance. She visited North and ordered a complete wardrobe in that tone. When the first fabric arrived from Lyon, Worth thought it the ugliest color he had ever seen. Since Bismarck was the most hated man in Europe at the time the designer promptly dubbed it 'Bismarck Brown'. Perversely, it caught on and became a favorite color all over the Western world. Not only gowns, but hats, shoes, and even hair dye were all the rage in Bismarck Brown.

We have many so-called Victorian dresses. This is an ambiguous designation, since

Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1902, years which covered many changes of style. The Queen, herself, was never very fashionable, and for many years was so frequently "in the family way" she could not worry about the latest style. After her beloved Albert died she spent the rest of her life wearing only black relieved by a bit of lace at her throat.

Truly elegant and spectacular were the Edwardian or "Lilly Langtree" gowns that were fashioned just at the turn of the century, the fin de siècle, thought by many to be the last gasp of splendor. Our most glorious example is a white satin damask two-piece ball gown, embroidered in gold and trimmed with crystal beads and hundreds of tiny prisms. The top is finished with a fringe of 51,000 tiny crystal beads. On the inside are 23 bones engineered so carefully our heroine could manage to walk and even dance with a fair amount of grace.

The 1920's have given us several beaded, knee-length chiffons, and an original Lucien Lelong Paris model with patent leather sequins and a velvet tunic printed with gold and silver dragons and hand-painted buttons. We found the piece was signed by the designer. This makes it a real treasure, but unfortunately, the signature is almost illegible, necessitating painstaking research concerning the period to identify the signer.

With few exceptions it is women's clothes which have been acquired and described, here and elsewhere. Few men's clothes have been saved. Less influenced by changing styles, men wore their sturdy suits until they began to show frayed cuffs and shiny surfaces, then handed them down to sons and servants, and they were eventually walked on when braided into rugs. Because there was little sentiment for blue serge or celluloid collars, few survive. Our "Salute to the Men of Monterey" display at the 1981 Antique Show, although far from complete, was impressive with three frock coats from different eras, several uniforms, and a selection of hats. Outstanding was Fulton Freeman's charro "suit of a hundred horses."

Least represented in any collection are everyday clothes. One author of fashion history feels that the clothes that survive their time are those that did not fit, were a displeasing color, or put away because of unhappy associations. He states that favorite clothes were worn over and over, often by several generations, and finally became bright spots in quilts.

As we find ourselves stewards, protectors, and preservers, the enormity of our responsibility strikes us. Conservation of textiles is a fairly new discipline, and as converts we tend to be a bit fanatical. We have been known to come on like Carrie Nation at the sight of a plastic bag or a wire coat hanger. Our first rule is that no one is allowed to wear any of our costumes for any reason. This is the most important care we can give them. These authentic pieces of history are fragile and irreplaceable. The perspiration and oil of human skin are harmful to fibers. Furthermore, our ancestors were MUCH smaller than we, and most of our things will not fit present day models or even manikins. In addition, we will display items for only 3 months or preferably less. Light, dust, heat, and the damp are the worst enemies of fabrics.

Only a fraction of Association treasures has been mentioned. Fans, beaded purses, hats, shoes, gloves, and lingerie—all deserve special attention. Each piece is a delight and enriches our knowledge. Sharing in the excitement of this growing collection are very special people: Nancy Stone, Dale Osborn, Jane McCune, and Beryl Beemer who work one or two days a week. Each contributes a different viewpoint and talent to our project.

We continue to photograph, date, detail, and describe each garment on our catalogue sheets and feel blessed to have local and visiting experts help us to identify these treasures.

Jeanne Graham, Costume Chairman

WOMEN OF THE ADOBES

The *Noticias* wishes to continue tribute to the women of the adobes, honored by this year's Association adobe house tour. From 1769 to 1846 a handful of Spanish military dons, the first of whom came with Portola and Anza, held affairs of California in their hands against foreign domination, defending, developing, and helping govern California under Spain and Mexico. The donas who joined them lived at first in miserable presidio quarters or small dirt-floored adobes, bore many children, but with it all created the unique adobe way of life we now celebrate.

First, an all-too-brief venture into the genealogical maze of the great Hispanic families linking this life in which Monterey was important.

Dona Maria Antonio Victoria Carrillo, married to Don Jose Francisco de Ortega; one of the first white wives to reach California, and whose son was the first white child born there.

Dona Maria Dolores Valencia, married to Don Juan Pablo Grijalva; with daughters Josefa and Maria del Carmen marched with her husband from Sonora, Mexico, across the California desert by way of the Colorado, to meet Anza; rode into Monterey in 1776.

Dona Josefa Grijalva, married to Don Jose Antonio Yorba; lived in Monterey when Don Jose served there under Lt. Col. Pedro Fages, later governor in Monterey until 1790.

Dona Maria Dolores Ruiz, married to Antonio Maria Lugo who fought Bouchard but encouraged the Frenchman's dissident American crewman, Joseph Chapman, to stay in California.

Dona Maria Antonio Carrillo, married to Don Jose de la Guerra y Noriega; Lugo's niece.

Dona Guadalupe Ortega, married to Joseph Chapman; grand daughter of Don Jose Francisco de Ortega.

Dona Maria Soledad Ortega, married to Don Luis Antonio Arguello, first California-born governor under Mexico.

Dona Concepcion Arguello, sister of Don Luis Antonio; disappointed lover of Rezanof of Russia.

Dona Encarnacion Vallejo, married to John R. Cooper; sister of Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo.

Dona Francisca Felipa Benicia Carrillo, married to General Mariano Vallejo. With her the great era of the Spanish donas ended.

One who lived through several decades of that era as well as of the American period was Angustias de la Guerra, grand daughter of Don Jose Francisco de Ortega.

Angustias was married for 23 years to Don Manuel Jimeno Casarin, and after his death in 1853, to Dr. James L. Ord. In addition to being mentioned by many of her contemporary observers, Angustias herself left a valuable account and interpretation of events and people in her time up to the American period.¹

Shortly after 1846-1848, the dates with which Angustias concluded her narrative, Bayard Taylor, reporting on the 1849 Constitutional Convention in Monterey, wrote of the most pleasant society to be found in California. "There is a circle of families, American and native . . . whose genial and refined social character makes one forget his previous ideas of California life. . . . The most favorite resort of Americans is that of Dona Augusta Ximeno, the sister of Don Pablo de la Guerra. This lady whose active charity in aiding the sick and distressed has won her the enduring gratitude of many and the esteem of all, has made her house the home of every American officer who visits Monterey. . . . She is a woman whose nobility of character, native vigor and activity of

intellect, and above all whose instinctive refinement and winning grace of manner would have given her a complete supremacy in society had her lot been cast in Europe or the United States. . . She was thoroughly versed in Spanish literature, as well as the works of Scott and Cooper, through translations, and I have frequently been surprised at the justness and elegance of her remarks on various authors. She possessed, moreover, all those bold and daring qualities which are so fascinating in a woman, when softened and made graceful by true feminine delicacy. She was a splendid horsewoman and had even considerable skill in throwing the lariat."

Angustias was born June 11, 1815, into the rich de la Guerra family in San Diego. Her mother was Maria Antonia Carrillo and her father Don Jose de la Guerra y Noriega. They had four daughters noted for beauty and intelligence and five sons.



Angustias de la Guerra Ord

In 1830 Don Manuel Jimeno Casarin married the 15-year old Angustias. Don Manuel was an educated and distinguished man, secretary to Governor Alvarado during whose frequent illnesses he acted as governor. Don Manuel filled other important offices, was a rancher and business man, and known for his charities. After their marriage, he and Angustias moved to Monterey. They had 11 children.

The Jimeno or Casarin adobe, long since gone, was built on the site of the present San Carlos Hotel, facing Calle Principal (Main) and on the south side of the Old Convent, St. Catherine's Academy, originally a hotel built by Don Jimeno.

The Jimeno wedding was a major community event as described in *Life in California* by Alfred Robinson, a Yankee trader who married Angustias' sister. On the wedding eve the bride, dressed in her usual church costume of black, went with her father to the Mission where "joining of hands" took place toward morning. Later, church ceremonies were performed and breakfast served by the groom's brother, Padre Antonio. Then the groom and his bride were escorted to her father's spacious and elaborate house. Padre Antonio's Indians distributed presents. Some joined in the procession in which the married couple rode in an open *barouche* accompanied by the bride's sister. Following in a closed carriage were her father and the Padre, and in another, her mother and cousins. Last rode men and women on horseback. Guns were fired at the Mission and Presidio, and at the house there was a *fiesta de boda*. Dinner was served to many guests at one o'clock and followed by dancing. Other guests arrived by evening, and dancing continued until dawn. For several succeeding nights the *fandango* and feasting were repeated at the adobe.

In 1825, Angustias' 16-year old sister, Maria Teresa, had married William Hartnell. This wedding was also elaborate. It was preceded by fiesta evenings and days occupied with arranging gorgeous toilettes, practicing dance steps, playing games, and preparing *cascarones* filled with perfume. Prayers in church by the couple preceded the marriage, and Mission bells tolled to announce the ceremony. It was followed by a procession led by a garlanded *carreta* drawn by two white oxen and carrying the wedded pair. Then came carts of family and friends, then *caballeros*—a cavalcade which made its way to the

comandante's house for a noonday meal. Feasting and gaiety went on for several days. The Hartnells established their lovely Monterey home, the happiness of which was said to be the constant pre-occupation of Teresa's life.

Donas fell in love and married young, provided family, church, and the military approved. John Baptist Rogers Cooper married Encarnacion Vallejo when she was 13, he expediting it by becoming a Mexican citizen and becoming Don Juan. Mariano Vallejo became betrothed to little *Senorita* Francisca Felipa Carrillo, "A spinster of 15 years of age". Mariano, as an officer in the Mexican army, had to obtain permission to marry from the War Department in Mexico City. This was delayed for 17 months, and then special dispensation was necessary for the couple to wed during Lent.

The ceremony, with two rings and an *arras* of 13 ounces of gold which Francisca gave to the church, was followed by a joyous, colorful procession. It wound its way from the San Diego Mission, the bride and groom on fine steeds with silver trappings, heralded by a military band in scarlet jackets and white pantaloons, followed by padres in contrasting browns and Indians in their dress of dull Mission fabrics. Prolonged and elaborate festivities followed the union of two great Alta California families.

Some marriages caused excitement of a different sort. In 1829, Governor Echeandia refused to sanction the marriage of Josefa, Francisca Carrillo's sister, to Capt. Henry Delano Fitch, an American "foreigner" and a Protestant. At Josefa's suggestion, Capt. Fitch carried her onto a merchant ship anchored in the bay, and the couple sailed to Valparaiso and were married.

Another of Francisca's sisters, Ramona, was wed the same year to Don Romualdo Pacheco, aide-de-camp of Echeandia. The bride was beautiful in a ribbon-trimmed gown of yellow satin, the bridegroom splendid in a white satin waistcoat of Parisian design. Wedding guests sang, danced, and feasted for 3 days. Don Pacheco was killed in 1831 shortly after Ramona gave birth to a son.

Angustias Jimeno's daughter, Manuela, at age 16 fell in love with Lt. Alfred Sully. Because of parental objections they became secretly engaged and eloped. Angustias shut out her daughter in anger, but relented when Manuela bore a son. A few days after the birth, 17-year old Manuela died of convulsions (it was said because she was given an orange to eat). Angustias devotedly took over care of her grandson, but when he was but one month old, he was accidentally smothered in Angustias' bed.



Casa Don Manuel Jimeno Casarin (Courtesy of Monterey Public Library)

In 1839 an unusual ceremony caused a stir in Monterey. Dona Martina, daughter of Francisco Castro, was married by proxy to His Excellency Don Juan Bautista Alvarado, who, in Monterey, was either "too ill or too busy" to attend his own wedding. A gold ring was placed on the bride's finger by Don Jose Antonio Estrada. Eight days later the bride arrived in Monterey for fiestas and fireworks.

After marriage, these young girl wives began bearing children as regularly as nature permitted. Their fecundity amazed foreign observers. The following family sizes were not uncommon: Senora Secundino Robles, 29 children; Senora Jose Ortega, 21; Senora Jose Antonio Castro, 26; Mrs. Hartnell, 25. Even with high infant mortality, births outnumbered deaths 3 to 1, and families averaged 12 or more children. Bayard Taylor said a native was pointed out to him as the father of 36 children, 20 by one marriage, 16 by another.

Childbirth, with some customs prevailing which seem appalling to us now, could, however, be a nightmare experience. Prudenciano Vallejo de Amesti, married at 16 to Jose Amesti (twice her age), barely survived the difficult birth of their first child, was invalided for months, and left with a deformed back for life.

Early California Spanish women, universally described as beautiful with shining black hair, fine teeth, and lovely voices, adored pretty clothes and festive occasions. For several decades coveted finery was hard to come by. While Don Fages was governor and Don Jose Antonio Yorba served under him in Monterey, Comte de La Perouse, the French navigator, came to discuss trade. All the women, including Yorba's wife Josefa, and Eulalia Fages, made excited preparations for the unusual event. Eulalia, the fiery discontent, complained that she and the other women would have nothing suitable to wear. Indeed, trade restrictions made access to material for new gowns impossible, and the ladies were forced to re-make their old gowns. But they practiced their instruments, songs, dances, and French to make a fine impression.

Richard Henry Dana years later noted that the ladies gowns seemed to be of European design but with short sleeves and loose, uncorseted waists. He uncharitably added: "Fondness for dress among women is excessive and is often the ruin of many of them." On board trading ships entire families spent freely for "everything that could be imagined", paying 300% over Boston prices usually with cow hides, the "California bank notes."

Bayard Taylor, describing the ball held at the end of the 1849 Constitutional Convention in Monterey, said that "only a few women could assemble a complete ball dress and white kids could not be had in Monterey for love or money . . . scarcely a single dress that was seen belonged entirely to its wearer, having probably had several previous owners."

(to be continued)

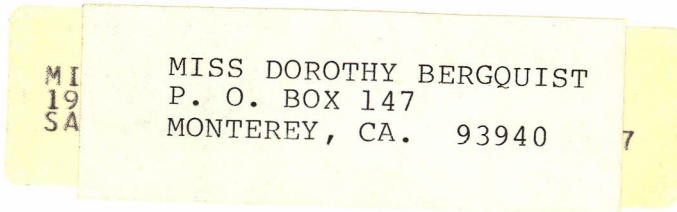
D.T.

1. *Occurencias en California*, dictated to Thomas Savage in 1878 and translated and edited as *Occurences in Hispanic California*, by Francis Price and William H. Ellison, Academy of American Franciscan History, Washington, D.C. 1956.

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